

Extended Narrative

Steven Holl and Vito Acconci

Storefront for Art and Architecture

Vito Acconci, a sculptor, sees architecture as a consequence of idioms, parodies and myths in popular culture. His work often undermines what he sees as the stoic and concrete behavior of architecture through an array of cultural criticisms. Acconci's recent work has increasingly employed architecture as metaphor in projects including, "Houses Up the Wall," "Instant House," "House of Cars," and "Bad Dream House," exploring the potential of architecture as a language of expression. Steven Holl, an architect, on the other hand, sees the exploration of built forms as being the highest cultural expression. Through his work of simple geometry, consistent proportions and details, Holl emphasizes the necessity of a formal tradition amongst the ambiguities of contemporary culture.

Bringing Vito Acconci and Steven Holl to work together, Storefront encourages an effort in contrast to the tradition of collaboration. A tradition that is typically a partnership of compatibility here combines two different perspectives, one that disrupts and one that anchors. The two will work together from the beginning, from the conceptual design to the construction of the installation. Equal input and responsibility will produce a project that is neither art nor architecture, but its hybrid.

The proposed project will be two fold:

Exterior Installation: Built into the outside wall will be capsules, something like 'tumors.' The walls will swell out, with bumps and bulges onto the outside. At the same time, the bulges will involve a general public as they project onto the street and will provide a particular function. These swells can be entered from inside and/or outside of the space, and will house documentation of the collaborative process. These are to include models, drawings, text, video and audio recordings of conversations and procedures. The exterior "swells," as well as some of these interior capsules will remain for a year after the exhibition.

Interior Exhibition Storefront's interior, a wedge-like space, is to be re-built into a forced perspective: the ceiling to slope down, and the floor to slope up, as they approach the far point (the narrowest section of Storefront at only two feet across). The space will be, in effect, made smaller in order to appear larger (longer). The Storefront interior space will be turned into a corridor with bulges off to the side. This 'hallway-with-warts,' then, is used as the media points -- a media route with media nodes -- a media circulation-system with media stopping-places.

The premise is to turn a place for the exhibition of drawings and models into an occasion for media architecture, mental architecture and 'virtual' architecture. This exhibition will be held for a period of six to eight weeks.

The basement space of Storefront, used now as storage, will also be involved, as similar capsules project down from the ground floor. Each of small these capsules will house media displays, reading rooms or administrative space. Thus, as the inside and outside walls push and pull, floor and ceiling, top and bottom similarly interact, involving the public in what is normally private and vice versa.

This collaboration between Vito Acconci and Steven Holl is a unique and ambitious undertaking that is committed to this critical thinking, expanding the scope of their respective disciplines and redefining the collaborative process. Storefront requests support for the design and implementation of this project and for the publication of an issue of FRONTS, a series of monographs published by Storefront, to document this project. FRONTS will be published in collaboration with the Princeton Architectural Press.